

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 BRASILIA 7580

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJ: THE POLITICAL SITUATION: ANTECEDENTS OF A POSSIBLE DIALOGUE

1. SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE REVIEWS THE BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL MOMENT IN BRAZIL WHICH, REGARDLESS OF ITS DURABILITY OR ULTIMATE SIGNIFICANCE, IS SHARPLY (BUT PERHAPS ONLY SUPERFICIALLY) DIFFERENT FROM THAT OBTAINING JUST TWO MONTHS AGO. A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE WILL DEAL WITH THE PRESSURES FOR AND AGAINST CHANGE EMANATING FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE BRAZILIAN BODY POLITIC, WILL SEEK TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VARIOUS ACTORS ON THE POLITICAL STAGE, AND WILL BOTH DESCRIBE THE KINDS OF POLITICAL CHANGE SOUGHT AND ASSESS THE LIKELIHOOD OF THEIR ATTAINMENT OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, I.E., BY THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL. END SUMMARY.

2. A SERIES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST SIX WEEKS HAVE GIVEN SHAPE--AND PERHAPS SOME SUBSTANCE--TO WHAT
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COULD BECOME A MEANINGFUL POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN BRAZIL. MANY IN THE OPPOSITION AND ELSEWHERE IN THE BODY POLITIC ARE SKEPTICAL--SOME HIGHLY SKEPTICAL--THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE. MEMORIES OF THE APRIL "PACKAGE" AND THE JUNE CASSATION OF MDB CHAMBER LEADER ALENCAR FURTADO ARE A POWERFUL INDUCEMENT TO CAUTION. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS INITIATED--AND PROFESSES TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT--EFFORTS AT

DIALOGUE, SPECULATION ABOUT THE SCOPE, CONTEXT AND PACE OF WHICH IS DOMINATING THE MEDIA. THE FACT THAT THE INITIATIVE HAS BEEN PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN LIGHTENING THE PESSIMISTIC CLIMATE OF MAY AND JUNE HAS NOT MADE THE REGIME'S MOTIVES LESS SUSPECT NOR THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME LESS IN DOUBT. BUT THE FACT THAT DISCUSSION IS GOING ON AND IS BEING FREELY REPORTED IS WIDELY VIEWED AS AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT INTENDS TO RETAIN CONTROL OF EVENTS AND THAT IT IS PREPARED TO USE THE MANY POLITICAL RESOURCES AT ITS COMMAND TO THAT END. FROM ITS BELEAGUERED POSITION OF MAY AND JUNE, IT HAS MANAGED TO MOVE BACK FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST TO THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL STAGE, A POSITION FROM WHICH OTHER ACTORS--SPOKESMEN FOR CIVILIAN AND SOME MILITARY OPINION--HAD BEGUN TO ASSUME INDEPENDENT ROLES. THE MDB HAS BEEN CONFIRMED IN AN ESSENTIALLY REACTIVE POSTURE. AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD SOME AT LEAST TEMPORARY SUCCESS IN CHANNELING GROWING DISCONTENT INTO AN OFFICIALLY CONSTRUCTED FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH IT IS PERMITTED EXPRESSION.

4. THE ORIGINS OF THE PRESENT FLUID SITUATION GO BACK TO GEISEL'S BRUTAL CLOSING OF THE CONGRESS LAST APRIL AND THE SUBSEQUENT "PACKAGE" OF ELECTORALLY RESTRICTIVE MEASURES. THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE WAKE OF THOSE ACTIONS WAS MARKED BY DEEPENING PESSIMISM. THE GULF BETWEEN
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THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIETY WAS WIDENING CONSTANTLY. IT WAS BELIEVED IN MANY CIRCLES THAT MATTERS COULD ONLY GET WORSE AND THAT, IF THEY DID, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONFRONT THE DILEMMA OF EITHER RESORTING TO OUTRIGHT DICTATORSHIP OR RISKING LOSS OF CONTROL. THE PESSIMISM WAS COMPOUNDED BY THE CASSATION IN LATE JUNE OF MDB CHAMBER LEADER ALENCAR FURTADO. A FEW SHORT WEEKS LATER, HOWEVER, THE DELICATE SUBJECT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION BEGAN OPENLY TO BE DISCUSSED NOTWITHSTANDING ENJOINDERS BY PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMEN THAT GEISEL WISHED THIS TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT JANUARY.

5. ON JULY 7 SNI CHIEF GENERAL JOAO BATISTA FIGUEIREDO DENIED A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE CLAIMING THAT HE WAS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. FOUR DAYS LATER GEISEL INTIMATE (AND FORMER PRESS SECRETARY) HUMBERTO BARRETO PUBLICLY ENDORSED FIGUEIREDO, CLAIMING THAT HE WAS EXPRESSING A PERSONAL VIEW THAT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH GEISEL, A STATEMENT NO OBSERVER BELIEVED AT THE TIME. THE MEDIA ERUPTED IN A SLICK, COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN THAT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN PREPARED IN ADVANCE FOR JUST SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. SUPPORTERS OF ARMY MINISTER SYLVIO FROTA SOON BEGAN TO STIR AND BEGAN THEIR OWN RELATIVELY MUTED PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

THAT DID NOT--OR WAS NOT ALLOWED TO--CATCH ON. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, HOWEVER, SAO PAULO'S SECOND ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL DILERMANDO GOMES MONTEIRO, DELIVERED HIMSELF OF A BRIEF BUT CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 63RD BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. HE SPOKE IN FAVOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS, IN SUPPORT OF MILITARY UNITY, AND ON BEHALF OF HIS OWN CREDENTIALS AS A STALWART SUPPORTER OF THE 1964 REVOLUTION. DURING THE ENSUING PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT ON HIS BEHALF DILERMANDO, WHOM GEISEL HAD PLACED IN THE SECOND ARMY POST TO CURB HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS THAT OCCURRED DURING THE TENURE OF HIS PREDECESSOR, WAS COMPARED FAVORABLY WITH THE DUKE OF CAXIAS, BRAZIL'S FOREMOST MILITARY HERO. SAO PAULO'S CARDINAL PAULO EVARISTO ARNS, A STALWART HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE, WAS AMONG THOSE WHO REFERRED TO DILERMANDO AS A "PACIFIER," WHICH IS CAXIAS' HISTORIC
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ATTRIBUTE.

6. CONCURRENTLY, SENATOR JOSE DE MAGALHAES PINTO, THE PRIME CIVILIAN SYMBOL OF THE 1964 REVOLUTION, ANNOUNCED HIS OWN CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY. MOST OBSERVERS DO NOT TAKE HIS CANDIDACY LITERALLY AND VIEW IT AS THE LAST HURRAH OF A MAN WHOSE AMBITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO REACH THE PINNACLE OF

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POLITICAL LIFE. HE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN CAMPAIGNING FREELY, WIDELY, WITH REFRESHING GOOD HUMOR AND, TO JUDGE BY A RECENT WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE, HE IS CONTRIBUTING TO AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE ABROAD. ACCORDING TO AT LEAST ONE POLITICAL COMMENTATOR (JORNAL DO BRASIL'S CARLOS CASTELLO BRANCO), MAGALHAES PINTO'S "CANDIDACY," WHATEVER IT MEANS IN PERSONAL TERMS FOR THE SENATOR, COULD WELL HAVE THE VIRTUE OF INFLUENCING THE SUCCESSION PROCESS WITHIN THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND TOWARDS A MORE LIBERAL CANDIDATE AND, LATER, INFLUENCING THAT CANDIDATE TOWARDS MORE LIBERAL POSITIONS. REGARDLESS OF HIS PROSPECTS, MAGALHAES PINTO IS THE ONLY CIVILIAN POLITICIAN CAPABLE OF INFLUENCING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, AND MANY OTHER POLITICIANS KNOW IT.

7. FACED WITH ALL THIS ELECTORAL ACTIVITY, GEISEL APPEARED TO GIVE WAY A BIT. IN EARLY AUGUST, ARENA SPOKESMEN INDICATED THAT, WHILE SUCCESSION COULD NOT FORMALLY BE DISCUSSED UNTIL JANUARY, "PERSONAL" VIEWS COULD BE EXPRESSED. THE SPOKESMEN WERE NOT CONTRADICTED BY GEISEL. SUCCESSION, THEN, BECAME A CONFIDENTIAL

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LEGITIMATE POLITICAL TOPIC. THE FACT THAT IT DID ENCOURAGE WIDENING DISCUSSION, MUCH OF WHICH CONTINUES TO FIND MEDIA EXPRESSION, ABOUT THE KIND OF RULES THAT SHOULD GOVERN THE SUCCESSION AND THE KINDS OF CHANGES THE SUCCESSOR SHOULD EITHER AGREE TO BEFORE HE TAKES OFFICE OR CARRY OUT SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

8. THE ATMOSPHERE CREATED BY THE LAUNCHING OF FIGUEIREDO'S "CANDIDACY" AND FOLLOW-ON DEVELOPMENTS WAS PROPITIOUS TO CONTINUOUSLY EXPANDING POLITICAL DISCUSSION. THE AUGUST 8 CELEBRATION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY OF LAW INTO BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITIES PROVIDED ADDITIONAL IMPETUS. THE "LETTER TO BRAZILIANS" CALLING FOR AN EARLY RETURN TO A STATE OF LAW (SAO PAULO 2142) WAS A CAREFULLY DRAFTED BUT CAUTIOUSLY SUBSCRIBED DOCUMENT WHICH BECAME--FOR A WHILE--THE CENTERPIECE OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION AND THE SPRINGBOARD FOR A MULTIPOLICITY OF OTHER APPEALS AND DEMANDS FOR CHANGE. FOR THE NEXT TWO OR THREE WEEKS THERE WERE A WELTER OF STATEMENTS, COUNTERSTATEMENTS, COMMENTARY, EDITORIALS, CARTOONS, AND RUMORS. ELDER STATESMAN (AND NOTED JURIST) AFFONSO ARINOS DE MELLO FRANCO WAS SAID TO BE PREPARING A STUDY, AT GOVERNMENT REQUEST, ON WAYS TO RETURN GRADUALLY TO A STATE OF LAW. RETIRED FORMER MILITARY COLLABORATORS OF FORMER PRESIDENT JANIO QUADROS AND THE LATE CARLOS LACERDA WROTE PUBLIC LETTERS URGING THE MILITARY TO RETURN TO THEIR BARRACKS--THOUGH MOSTLY OUT OF DISILLUSIONMENT THAT THE MILITARY'S IMAGE HAS BECOME SO TARNISHED. ONE WAS PLACED UNDER TUMPORARY HOUSE ARREST. SENATOR (AND FORMER COLONEL AND

LABOR AND EDUCATION MINISTER) JARBAS PASSARINHO, LONG A PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL IN REASONABLY GOOD STANDING WITH THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, URGED THE MILITARY SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER THE DESIRABILITY OF RETURNING TO ITS TRADITIONAL MODERATING ROLE IN BRAZILIAN SOCIETY. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS FLOCKED TO HIS PROTECTIVE UMBRELLA, CITING HIM IN SUPPORT OF DEMANDS FOR AN "IMMEDIATE" RETURN TO THE BARRACKS. PASSARINHO
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QUICKLY EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD MEANT A GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL TO COINCIDE WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL TERM ENDING IN 1984, WHEREUPON THE PRESS IMMEDIATELY DUBBED HIM "JARBAS ORWELL."

9. THE POLITICAL PARTIES WERE ALSO STIRRING. ARENA SCHEDULED A MEETING OF ITS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WITH ITS REGIONAL PRESIDENTS FOR EARLY SEPTEMBER. ITS OFFICIAL PUBLIC POSTURE, HOWEVER, WAS INFLEXIBLE. OSTENSIBLY ACTING AS SPOKESMAN, ITS HARDLINE CHAMBER LEADER, DEPUTY JOSE BONIFACIO DE ANDRADA, ISSUED A DECALOGUE SETTING OUT ALL OF THE THINGS THAT WOULD NOT HAPPEN BEFORE THE 1978 ELECTIONS, ENDING WITH "IN SUM, NOTHING WILL CHANGE." THE MDB, LICKING ITS MOST RECENT WOUNDS (CASSATION OF ITS CHAMBER LEADER AND ITS INDEFINITE BANISHMENT FROM RADIO AND TV--SEE BRASILIA 5504 AND 6362--OPENLY BUT VERY TENTATIVELY DISCUSSED ITS OWN POTENTIAL DISSOLUTION AND SCHEDULED AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE END OF SEPTEMBER. INTERNALLY (AND PRIVATELY) THE MBDB WAS ALSO DISCUSSING THE FOCUS OF THE CONVENTION. REVIVED SENTIMENT IN SUPPORT OF A CALL FOR A NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION, STRONGEST WITH ITS RADICAL AND YOUNGER ELEMENTS, WAS COUNTERED BY OLDER MODERATES WHO HELD SUCH A PLATFORM QUIXOTIC AND UNATTAINABLE IN THE FACE OF STRONG GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION. LED BY SENATE LEADER FRANCO MONTORO, THE LATTER GROUP ADVOCATED A "PROGRAM OF ACTION" AS A CAMPAIGN PLATFORM AND COMMISSIONED A SERIES OF STUDIES ON DIFFERENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS. (THE MBDB MODERATES, HOWEVER, BOWED TO PRESSURES FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE PARTY AND SUPPORTED A CALL FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AT THEIR CONVENTION WHICH WAS ADVANCED TO SEPTEMBER 14-15--BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY.)

10. BY MID-AUGUST, HOWEVER, WORD THAT SOMETHING ELSE WAS AFOOT BEGAN TO CIRCULATE. ARENA SENATE LEADER PETRONIO PORTELLA WAS SAID TO BE TALKING PRIVATELY OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE NATION'S POLITICAL FRAMEWORK--IF NOT BEFORE THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1978 ELECTIONS AT LEAST BY THE MARCH 1979 INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PRESIDENT. THIS LED TO TANTATIVE,
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THEN INCREASING AND CONTINUING PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIVE MERIT AND FEASIBILITY OF "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" OF THE REVOLUTION BY INCORPORATION OF PERTINENT "EXCEPTIONAL" LEGISLATION, E.G., INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO. 5 (A-5), IN THE 1967 CONSTITUTION--AS AMENDED IN 1969--OR RETURN TO A STATE OF LAW VIA "CONSTITUTIONALIZATION" THROUGH A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY SUCH AS ADVOCATED BY MDB ELEMENTS AND OTHERS, E.G., STUDENTS, INTELLECTUALS, SOME PROFESSIONAL GROUPS.

11. THE FRAMEWORK OF WHAT ARENA SOON BEGAN TO REFER TO OPENLY AS "DIALOGUE" WAS NOT ESTABLISHED, HOWEVER, UNTIL AUGUST 19, WHEN PROTELLA TOLD THE PRESS THE PRESENT CONGRESS, NOT A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, WOULD MAKE WHATEVER CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS MIGHT BE DESIRABLE. HE SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A RENEWED AND OPEN DIALOGUE, AND OF GEISEL'S REPORTED DESIRE TO MOVE BRAZIL TOWARD GREATER DEMOCRACY. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, ARENA'S PRESIDENT, DEPUTY FRANCELINO PEREIRA, WITH CONSIDERABLE APPARENT AUTHORITY AFTER HAVING

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MET FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD WITH GEISEL, ANNOUNCED ELEVEN POINTS WHICH, HE SAID, WERE TO PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR "INSTITUTIONALIZATION." THESE INCLUDED SOME (UNSPECIFIED) FORM OF METAMORPHOSIS OF IA-5, SOME CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE, AND PARTICIPATION OF BOTH EXISTING PARTIES IN THE FORMULATION

OF REFORMS. IT CONCURRENTLY BECAME EVIDENT THAT BONIFACIO, A CONSTANT DOOMSAYER AS TO MDB'S ABILITY TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ANY OVERTURE, HAD BEEN CONCURRENTLY TOLD TO TEMPER HIS LANGUAGE--WHICH, WITH AN OCCASIONAL LAPSE, HE HAS DONE. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, ARENA POSTPONED ITS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING TO SEPTEMBER 15-16, REPORTEDLY TO ALLOW TIME FOR GEISEL TO PREPARE HIS CLOSING ADDRESS. THIS MOVE WAS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE RELATED TO THE DEVELOPING "DIALOGUE."

12. THE NEXT INDICATOR CAME IN LATE AUGUST, WHEN FRANCELINO -- AGAIN EMERGING FROM A MEETING WITH GEISEL -- ANNOUNCED THAT POLITICAL EVOLUTION WOULD TAKE PLACE IN FOUR STAGES: (A) CREATION OF A PROPITIOUS CLIMATE -- THE CURRENT STAGE; (B) IDENTIFICATION OF IDEAS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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CHANGE -- ALSO TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR; (C) THE PARTICIPATION OF GEISEL'S CHOSEN SUCCESSOR IN THE DIALOGUE, AFTER NEXT JANUARY'S SELECTION; AND (D) DRAFTING OF A PROPOSAL TO BE VOTED ON AFTER NEXT YEAR'S SCHEDULED ELECTIONS. THE MDB, POLITICAL COMMENTARORS, AND OTHERS BEGAN TO WEIGH WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS REPRESENTED A SERIOUS INITIATIVE TOWARD EVENTUAL CHANGE, OR A TACTICAL EFFORT TO REVERSE THE LOSS OF SUPPORT THAT HAD BECOME PRECIPITIOUS AFTER THE APRIL MEASURES, TO INJECT SOME OPTIMISM INTO A DANGEROUSLY DEPRESSED POLITICAL CLASS, TO DIVERT PUBLIC ATTENTION AWAY FROM DISSATISFACTION WITH REGIME ACTIONS, OR TO GAIN TIME FOR THE ORDERLY CONDUCT OF THE SUCCESSION PROCESS. ON AUGUST 31, PORTELLA ANNOUNCED THAT ARENA'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING AND GEISEL'S SPEECH, SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 15-16, WERE BOTH POSTPONED SINE DIE. ARENA SUBSEQUENTLY ALLOWED IT TO BE KNOWN THAT THE POSTPONEMENT WAS INTENDED TO PERMIT THE "DIALOGUE" TO PROCEED UNHINDERED BY AN ARENA-GEISEL PREEMPTION OF CONCLUSIONS OR DECISIONS THAT MIGHT ULTIMATELY BE ARRIVED AT THROUGH DISCUSSION. THIS GESTURE PERSUADED SOME HARD-CORE SKEPTICS, SUCH AS AUTHORITATIVE AND WIDELY RESPECTED JORNAL DO BRASIL COLUMNIST, CARLOS CASTELLO BRANCO, TO ACKNOWLEDGE GRUDGINGLY THAT SOMETHING MIGHT BE IN THE WIND AFTER ALL, ALTHOUGH THEY REQUIRED FURTHER PROOF.

13. WITHIN TWO DAYS, THE MDB MOVED ITS OWN CONVENTION FORWARD FROM THE END OF SEPTEMBER TO SEPTEMBER 14-15, OSTENSIBLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TIME FRAME ARENA HAD VACATED SO AS NOT TO INTERFERE WITH TOP MDB LEADERS' LONG-STANDING TRAVEL PLANS. THE MOVE, HOWEVER, WAS HELD TENTATIVELY BY AN EQUALLY SKEPTICAL O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO COLUMNIST TO BE A RETURN GESTURE OF GOOD WILL TO ARENA'S. WHAT HAS HAPPENED, O ESTADO'S COLUMNIST WROTE, IS SIMPLY CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT BOTH PARTIES -- WHETHER IN CONCERT OR NOT -- HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO CLEAR OUT THE UNDERBRUSH SO THAT DIALOGUE CAN TAKE PLACE. THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT WAS WORD OF A MEETING, REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED FOR EARLY OCTOBER, BETWEEN PORTELLA AND MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES, HERALDED IN THE PRESS TO REPRESENT THE "OFFICIAL BEGINNING" OF THE DIALOGUE. THE MDB, MEANWHILE, WAS HURRIEDLY FORMULATING ITS CONVENTION POSTURE.

14. OBSERVERS IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE CAUTIONED THAT THE LAST TIME MDB HAD TAKEN A STRONG STAND (LAST MARCH) IT IN EFFECT "FORCED" THE GOVERNMENT INTO HARSH REACTION. ARENA'S IRREPRESSIBLE BONIFACIO HAS HELD ALL ALONG THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S BEST EFFORTS AT DIALOGUE AND ACCOMMODATION WILL COME TO NAUGHT BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS MDB INABILITY TO RESPOND IN CIVILIZED FASHION TO SERIOUS OVERTURES. CONCURRENTLY, HOWEVER, PORTELLA LET IT BE KNOWN LAST WEEK THAT HE WOULD ALSO BE TALKING WITH CHURCH AND BUSINESS ELEMENTS AND MEMBERS OF BRAZIL'S HIGHLY RESPECTED BAR ASSOCIATION. THIS NEWS MET WITH GENERAL APPROVAL.

15. OTHER SECTORS HAVE BEEN STIRRING AS WELL. STUDENTS HAVE BECOME ACTIVE ON A NATION-WIDE BASIS (BRASILIA 7095), ALTHOUGH THEY ARE CURRENTLY QUIET. THE CHURCH HAS BEEN MAKING OCCASIONAL BUT INCREASINGLY INSISTENT PRONOUNCEMENTS IN FAVOR OF DIALOGUE AND CHANGE, BOTH THROUGH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF BRAZILIAN BISHOPS (CNBB) AND INDIVIDUAL CLERGY -- MOST NOTABLY SAO PAULO CARDINAL PAULO EVARISTO ARNS. THE PRESS, EDITORIALY AS WELL AS VIA ITS NEWS COLUMNS AND COLUMNS OF OPINION, HAS BEEN ARTICULATE AND EXPRESSIVE. WORD HAS FILTERED, VIA NEWS COLUMNS AND PERSONAL CONTACT, OF SUPPORT FOR DIALOGUE FROM THE POWERFUL SAO

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PAULO BUSINESS COMMUNITY. AND MOST RECENTLY, EVEN
USUALLY QUIESCENT LABOR HAS BEGUN TO STIR -- NOT YET
IN ADVOCACY OF POLITICAL CHANGE, WITH WHICH IT CAN BE
ASSUMED TO BE SYMPATHETIC, BUT ON WAGE ISSUES WHICH COULD
EASILY LEAD TO BROADER DEMANDS (BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL).

16. MEANWHILE, GEISEL HIMSELF CONTRIBUTED TO THE CREATION OF
A "PROFITIOUS CLIMATE." DURING AN AUGUST VISIT TO BELO HORIZONTE,
GEISEL ALLOWED IT TO BE SAID THAT HE "WAS NOT DYING OF LOVE"
FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL ACTS AND HE ACCEPTED A STUDENT INVITATION
TO ATTEND (BUT NOT NECESSARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN) A
POLITICAL DISCUSSION ON SOME UNDETERMINED DATE. ON AUGUST
31, GEISEL ALLOWED IT TO BE SAID THAT PORTELLA'S TALKS
WERE "A GOOD WAY TO POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING AND
PUBLIC PEACE." ON SEPTEMBER 5, MDB CHAMBER LEADER
FREITAS NOBRE SAID HE HAD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT GEISEL
IS OPPOSED TO THE EXTENSION OF THE TERMS OF ANY CURRENT
INCUMBENTS -- A THESIS HELD STRONGLY BY A NUMBER OF
ARENA POLITICIANS WHO, ACCORDING TO PORTELLA, ARE
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MAKING HIS TASK MORE DIFFICULT. REVERSING A LONG-STANDING
PUBLIC POSITION, GEISEL WAS ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING HE HOLDS
NO BRIEF FOR CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT TWO-PARTY SYSTEM --.
A THOUGHT WHICH LED FRANCELINO TO CAUTION, HOWEVER, THAT
NO ONE SHOULD EXPECT ARENA AND MDB TO DISAPPEAR BUT
RATHER THAT THEY MIGHT COME TO SHARE THE ELECTORATE
WITH AT LEAST TWO OTHER PARTIES.

17. THIS WAS THE BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH THE MDB HELD
ITS NATIONAL CONVENTION. A FINAL ITEM, HIGHLY PERTINENT
TO THE CONTINUED UNFOLDING OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION --
IF THIS UNFOLDING IS TO CONTINUE -- WAS ARMY MINISTER FROTA'S RECENT
WARNING, OSTENSIBLY TO THE PRESS, CONCERNING THE LIMITS
OF TOLERANCE BEYOND WHICH THE REGIME WOULD FORCEFULLY --
THOUGH PERHAPS LEGALLY -- REDRESS PERCEIVED INJURIES OR
AFFRONTS (BRASILIA 7498). NO POLITICAL ACTOR OR OBSERVER
HARBORED SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT FROTA'S WARNING WAS (A)

FULLY SUPPORTED, IF NOT STIMULATED, BY GEISEL HIMSELF,
AND (B) EXTENSIVE TO ALL POLITICAL ACTORS, INCLUDING
THE PRE-CONVENTION MDB.

18. COMMENT: WHILE THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HAS CHANGED
CONSIDERABLY OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS, NO ONE (INCLUDING
THIS EMBASSY) NOT PRIVY TO THINKING AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS
OF GOVERNMENT IS YET READY TO BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT
IS PREPARED TO SEE REAL CHANGE. THERE ARE TOO MANY
REMINDERS OF PAST FALSE STARTS, AND TOO KEEN A REALIZATION
THAT HARDLINE MILITARY PRESSURES HAVE ABORTED POTENTIAL
POLITICAL OPENINGS TIME AND AGAIN SINCE 1967.

19. WITHIN THE RESILIENT BRAZILIAN BODY POLITIC, HOWEVER,
THERE IS A CAUTIOUS AWARENESS OF AN INDISPUTABLE FACT:
TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THE GEISEL REGIME, AND IF THE
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PRESIDENT REALLY INTENDS TO ASSURE HIMSELF A POSITIVE
RECORD IN HISTORY AND TO DELIVER ON THE PROMISE HE
HELD OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS TENURE BY ARMING
HIS CHOSEN SUCCESSOR WITH THE TOOLS TO LEAD BRAZIL BACK
TO A "STATE OF LAW" BY THE MID-1980'S, HE MUST START
SOMEWHERE.

20. A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE WILL DEAL WITH THE PRESSURES FOR
AND AGAINST CHANGE EMANATING FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS OF
THE BRAZILIAN BODY POLITIC, WILL SEEK TO IDENTIFY AND
ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VARIOUS ACTORS ON THE
POLITICAL STAGE, AND WILL BOTH DESCRIBE THE KINDS OF
POLITICAL CHANGE SOUGHT AND ASSESS THE LIKELIHOOD OF
THEIR ATTAINMENT OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, I.E., BY THE
INAUGURATION OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL.
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Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRASIL07580
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770337-0545
Format: TEL
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770957/aaaabvuj.tel
Line Count: 532
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 23e63245-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 10
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1250971
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE POLITICAL SITUATION: ANTECEDENTS OF A POSSIBLE DIALOGUE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/23e63245-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009